

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

ICA-11 HA-05 IO-13 AID-05 /099 W

-----102740 050621Z /62

P 041400Z APR 78

FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9023

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI

AMCONSUL BUKAVU

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 3228

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, SCUL, PINT, CG

SUBJECT: MOBUTU MOVES TO IMPROVE CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS IN ZAIRE

REF: 77 KINSHASA A-34

1. SUMMARY: ZAIRE'S PRESIDENT MOBUTU HAS TAKEN ANOTHER STEP TO IMPROVE CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS BY GRANTING PERMISSION TO LEADERS OF OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED CHURCHES TO TELEVISION RELIGIOUS PROGRAMS. END SUMMARY

2. IN HIS LATEST MOVE TO IMPROVE GOZ-CHURCH RELATIONS (REFAIR, PRESIDENT MOBUTU HAS GIVEN PERMISSION TO THE LEADERS OF THE CATHOLIC, PROTESTANT AND KIMBANGUIST CHURCHES TO TELEVISION RELIGIOUS PROGRAMS. THE DECISION, PRECEDED BY A SERIES OF MEETINGS BETWEEN MOBUTU AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS WHICH RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE PRESS COVERAGE, IS ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT DEPARTURE FROM EARLIER GOZ EFFORTS TO END THE AUTONOMY OF OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED RELIGIOUS GROUPS.

3. THOSE EFFORTS, WHICH CULMINATED IN THE "RADICALIZATION" POLICIES OF 1975, WERE JUSTIFIED IN TERMS OF
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MOBUTU'S PHILOSOPHY OF "AUTHENTICITY." THAT SAME DIFFUSE SET OF PRINCIPLES IS NOW BEING USED BY THE ZAIRIAN AUTHORITIES TO DEFEND THE NEW GOZ POLICY OF GREATER RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE. SINCE ZAIRIANS BELIEVED IN A SUPREME BEING LONG BEFORE THE COLONIAL ERA, THE PRESS ARGUES, THE INSTITUTIONAL FORMS OF RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION CREATED UNDER COLONIALISM CANNOT BE CONSIDERED INCOM-

PATIBLE WITH "AUTHENTICITY."

4. AN ARTICLE IN THE APRIL 1 ISSUE OF THE KINSHASA
DAILY ELIMA SUGGESTS TO US THAT MOBUTU HAS TAKEN THIS LATEST
STEP IN ORDER TO ELICIT GREATER CHURCH COOPERATION IN COPING
WITH THE SOCIAL COSTS OF ZAIRE'S CONTINUING ECONOMIC
CRISIS. THE ARTICLE CONCLUDES: "IT DEFINITELY IS
NEITHER TOO SOON NOR BY ACCIDENT THAT TELEVISION VIEWERS
WILL BE IN PERMANENT CONTACT WITH THIS SPIRITUAL NOURISH-
MENT WHICH HAS PERHAPS BEEN LACKING AT THE TIME WHEN THEY
NEED IT MOST. MAN DOES NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE." HOW
TO EASE THE BURDEN OF THOSE WITHOUT ENOUGH BREAD
PROBLEM OF MAJOR CONCERN TO THE MOBUTU GOVERNMENT.
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